

REMARKS

Claims 1-47 were pending in the present application. The Examiner has withdrawn claims 5-6, 9-11, 13-15, 17-22 and 25-29. Claims 2-3, 8, 32-35, 43, and 45-47 were objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but allowable subject matter was indicated. Claims 1, 4, 7, 12, 16, 23-24, 30-31, 36, 41-42 and 44 stand rejected. Claims 1, 3, 30, 32, and 44 are amended, and no new matter has been added.

Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of claims 37-40 and the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2-3, 8, 32-35, 43, and 45-47.

The Action objects to claim 32 because of an alleged informality. Solely in order to expedite prosecution, Applicants have amended claim 32 to recite the phrase "between the second side of the sling and the second side of the sleeve," as suggested by the Examiner, and respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn.

The Action also rejects claims 1, 4, 7, 12, 16 and 42 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,562,689 to Green et al. (hereinafter "Green"). The Action rejects claims 1, 12, 16, 30-31 and 36 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being allegedly anticipated by International Publication No. 2002/028315 to Lund et al. (hereinafter "Lund"). The Action also rejects claims 1, 23-24, 41 and 44 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,652,450 to Neisz et al. (hereinafter "Neisz") in view of Green. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections in view of the remarks set forth below.

Solely in the interest of expediting the prosecution of the present application and without conceding the issue of patentability, Applicants have amended independent claim 1 to incorporate the limitations that were defined by dependent claim 2, which the Examiner indicated would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim. Similarly, Applicants have amended claim 32, which the Action indicates would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, to incorporate the limitations of its base claim 30. Applicants have also amended independent claim 30 to incorporate the limitations that were defined by dependent

claim 2. Claims 2 and 41 are cancelled without prejudice. Applicants expressly reserve the right to rewrite any one or more of claims 2-3, 8, 33-35, 43, and 45-47 in independent form if its respective base claim is ultimately not allowed.

Applicants respectfully submit that the amended independent claims are patentable over the cited references, along with all of their respective dependent claims, and Applicants respectfully request that the present rejections be withdrawn and that a notice of allowance be sent with respect thereto.

Applicants direct the Examiner's attention to the prosecution history and Office Actions that have issued in U.S. Patent Application Nos. 10/093,398 and 10/093,450.

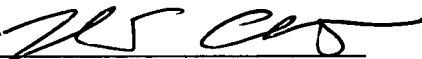
CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance. Early and favorable reconsideration is respectfully solicited. The Examiner may address any questions raised by this submission to the undersigned at 212-596-9000.

A petition for a two-month extension of time is being submitted herewith, and Applicants hereby request that the extension fee and any other fee required for timely consideration of this submission be charged to **Deposit Account No. 18-1945**, under Order No. MIY-P01-027 from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

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Respectfully submitted,

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